



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

DECLASSIFIED  
PA/HO, Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
June 9, 2005

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August 27, 1969

MEMORANDUM

TO: NEA - Mr. Davies

FROM: NEA/PAF - William F. Spengler *WFS*

SUBJECT: Afghanistan's Acquisition of SU-7 Jet Aircraft and the  
Conte and Symington Amendments - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

As you know, we recently were alerted to the possibility of a Conte Amendment problem with Afghanistan. Our Defense Attache at Kabul has now confirmed by visual observation (during the August 23 Jeshyn fly-past) the presence in Afghanistan of three SU-7 fighter-bombers, a new item in the Afghan arms inventory and one which in terms of the Conte Amendment would quite clearly be "sophisticated". The recent delivery of these SU-7's confirms in part reports we received earlier that the RGA negotiated in December 1968 for the purchase of a total of eleven SU-7's from the Soviets at a roughly estimated cost of \$889,000 each. It also was reported that they were to be paid for out of a line of credit for military equipment previously granted to Afghanistan by the Soviets, quite possibly prior to 1968.

Since January 1968, we have discussed with a number of Afghan leaders including King Zaher our concern, in the context of both the Conte and Symington Amendments, over Afghan defense spending and the Afghans' acquisition of sophisticated weaponry, which includes T-54 tanks, MIG-21's and over 100 SA-2 missiles. Being aware of our concern, the RGA must have anticipated a negative U.S. reaction to the appearance of the SU-7's. On August 20, a Foreign Ministry official told our Charge that the SU-7's "constituted nothing new whatsoever in terms of Afghanistan's overall military capability" and said that they were intended as replacements within overall squadron strength and structure according to an "agreement" (presumably with the Soviets) which long predated the Conte Amendment.

There are some possible discrepancies between the Foreign Ministry's version of the SU-7 story and information we have from other sources. Moreover, even if the Afghans can make a persuasive case that the

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-2-

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newly-acquired SU-7's are being financed from a line of credit predating the Conte Amendment, it is not clear whether this would make the Conte Amendment inapplicable. This constitutes a neat legal point which AID's General Counsel has not yet faced in Conte Amendment cases.

We are preparing a joint State/AID message to our Embassy endorsing Ambassador Neumann's proposal to seek clarification of the SU-7 transaction from top RGA officials and specifying the information we need from the RGA in order to help determine whether the Conte Amendment is applicable in this situation.

cc: NEA - Mr. Rockwell

NEA/PAF:WGRamsay:km 8/27/69

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